



Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

MINUTES

The Special Education Advisory Committee of the Upper Grand District School Board met on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 at 7:03 p.m. in a hybrid meeting in the Boardroom at the Guelph Board Office.

Members Present: Laurie Whyte, Chair; Trustee; Melissa Williamson, Community Member-at-Large; Andrea Wyshniowsky, Dufferin Child & Family Services; Jennifer Tremaine, Easter Seals Ontario; Maren Vsetula, FASD Ontario; Melody Dekorte, Inclusion Action in Ontario (IAO); Mandi McCreary, Kerry's Place Autism Services; Tina MacPherson, Autism Ontario (Alternate); Shelley Marks, OPVIC (Ontario Parents for Visually Impaired Children); Ted Fransen, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society

Staff Present: Wendy Donaldson, Superintendent of Student Achievement; Dianna Secord, Principal of Special Education; Kim Booth, Supervisor, CYCs; Becky Mantynen, Manager, Social Work & Specialized Teams; Kristen Smith, Manager, Communication, Language & Speech Services; Brent Bloch, Secondary Principal; Rochelle Murray-Cako, Elementary Principal; Mark Howe, Melissa Mitchell, Special Education Consultants

Absent: Denise Helm, Canadian Mental Health Association (regrets); John McNamara, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County; Alethia O'Hare-Stephenson, Trustee

Call to Order

Laurie Whyte, Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Land Acknowledgement and Anti-Racism Statement

Melissa Mitchell, Special Education Consultant, read the land acknowledgment statement and Dianna Secord, Principal of Special Education, read the Human Rights and Action statement.

Laurie Whyte welcomed Tina Macpherson, Autism Ontario, SEAC Alternate for Kerry's Place and asked the committee to introduce themselves. Tina Macpherson thanked everyone for the warm welcome.

Approval of Agenda of June 10, 2026

Moved by: Andrea Wyshniowsky

Carried

Approval of the Minutes of May 13, 2026

Moved by: Mandi McCreary

Carried

Updates from CEO

Peter Sovran, serving as both CEO and interim CFO, provided an update on the Upper Grand District School Board's budget process, emphasizing the prioritization of classroom resources and student supports despite declining enrollment. He highlighted recent provincial legislative changes, including Bill 101, which altered titles and roles within the board, and explained that the board is assessing the impact of these changes while maintaining a focus on classroom and student supports. He invited SEAC members to provide feedback on student support priorities, clarifying that input is welcome on any area that impacts students, not limited to specific categories. He encouraged members to share what is working well and should be maintained or enhanced, either during the meeting or via follow-up with the Chair or Vice-Chair of SEAC.

Melissa Williamson, Community Member-at-Large, emphasized the importance of extending literacy resources and professional development beyond primary grades into intermediate and high school levels, focusing on advanced reading strategies and comprehension. Peter Sovran agreed, reiterating the board's commitment to foundational skills in literacy and math.

Action Items

Wendy Donaldson provided the following updates:

- Review current systems and supports in place for students with FASD in partnership with DCAFS as well as Level 1 ASD – Wendy Donaldson explained that with only 43 students diagnosed with FASD among 8,000 IEPs, presenting achievement data could risk breaching confidentiality. The committee decided to focus on strategy alignment and staff response rather than individual achievement outcomes. Maren Vsetula (FASD Ontario) advocated for providing teachers with immediate best practice resources, such as a one-pager for those working with confirmed FASD students. Wendy Donaldson and Dianna Secord acknowledged this need and committed to reviewing and sharing available resources before the new school year. Maren Vsetula also raised concerns about the timing of bus driver training for students with special needs. Wendy Donaldson responded that while a presentation from the bus consortium is scheduled for September, concerns will be shared with the transportation leads for review.

- Educational Assistants next steps – Draft plan has received positive feedback at PD Day on June 5, 2026. It will be finalized over the summer and launched in September. Presentation will come to SEAC in September
- Parent Portal – Mark Howe presenting at meeting
- Human Rights Review – presentations every month on the work being done around Human Rights focus
- Student Transportation Services Presentation – Brent McDonald, Associate Director presenting in September around student transportation and next steps

Correspondence

The Board, at its meeting on May 26, 2026, approved the following resolution respecting the April 8, 2026 SEAC minutes:

That the Chair of the Board and the Chair of SEAC be requested to send a letter to the Minister of Education regarding the recurring unmet needs of students on behalf of UGDSB Special Education Advisory Committee.

SEAC reviewed and amended the draft Letter of Support.

Moved by:

Mandi McCreary

To accept the draft Letter of Support as written with the removal of the last bullet.

Motion carried

Moved by:

Melody Dekorte

That the amended draft Letter of Support be sent out.

Motion carried

Open Forum – Best Practice and Good News

Andrea Wyshniowsky, Dufferin Child & Family Services - work is moving forward with the Dufferin Youth Hub that will be located at the Edelbrock Centre. They plan to open in the fall. A Family Advisory Council is being put together, and there's a callout for anyone interested in joining to be directly related to some of the services that are offered at the Youth Hub and impact and influence some of the services offered at DCAFS in Dufferin.

Brent Bloch, Secondary Principal – students in LRC 10 program qualified and attended the provincial Special Olympics in London. They won a silver medal in bocce ball, gold medals in several track and field events, and a gold medal in the 100-meter relay event. It was a wonderful experience and a positive way to end the school year for them.

Policy Review Update

At the May 26th Board meeting, the following policies were approved:

Policy 324 - Data Governance and Security

Policy 711 - Procurement *(replaces Policy 302, 706, and 708)*

The following updated policies were approved:

Policy 325 - Health and Safety *(formerly Policy 406)*

Policy 413 - Safety (Behaviour Prevention and Intervention)

Policy 417 - Violence in the Workplace

Policy 517 - Service Animals for Students

The following policies were rescinded:

Policy 302 - Purchasing *(procedures moved under Policy 711 Procurement)*

Policy 318 - Responsible Use of Digital Technologies *(procedures moved under Policy 324 Data Governance and Security)*

Policy 604 - Safety in Science and Technological Education *(procedures moved under Policy 325 Health and Safety)*

Policy 706 - Corporate Credit Card *(procedures moved under Policy 711 Procurement)*

Policy 708 - Allowable Expenditures *(procedures moved under Policy 711 Procurement)*

Parent Portal

Mark Howe described the new version of the UGDSB Family Portal, which now allows parents to easily view information like attendance, report cards, classes, and digital IEPs for each child. The current version of the Family Portal has a link to “Version 2” of the portal that is currently in beta so that parents can try it. The new version will be fully launched in September.

The IEP Printing and Consultation form was updated to make it easier to read on a mobile device, which will help support families that are primarily using a phone for accessing this from. During these updates, he also used AI tools to simplify the language on the form, making it more accessible to parents. He also discussed ongoing efforts to allow parents to provide section-specific feedback and considered options for uploading an annotated PDF based on feedback provided by SEAC.

Mark Howe outlined plans to provide clearer support materials, improve communication about the portal, enable email notifications when IEPs are ready, and potentially add access to previous years' IEPs and speech-language reports as future enhancements to the portal.

Special Education Plan 2026-2027 – Final

Dianna Secord, Principal of Special Education, announced that the Special Education Plan 2026-2027 is complete except for final staffing numbers, which will be added once available. She thanked SEAC for their feedback throughout the year.

Moved by:

Andrea Wyshniowsky

1. That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Special Education Plan 2026–2027 with the understanding that the Special Education staffing information is pending final approval and will be incorporated into the Plan once approved; and
2. That the updated Special Education Plan 2026–2027, inclusive of staffing information, be forwarded to the Board for consideration.

Motion carried

Child and Youth Counsellor Interventions 2025-2026

Kim Booth, Supervisor, CYCs, presented a comprehensive overview of Child and Youth Counsellor (CYC) interventions, highlighting increased classroom presentations, the use of social-emotional learning platforms, and the accessibility of wellness hubs.

She reported that 49 CYCs serve 66 elementary and 11 secondary schools, focusing on Tier 1 (classroom presentations, wellness hubs) and Tier 2 (targeted skill-building groups) supports. CYCs delivered 5,577 presentations, an increase of 2,333 over the previous year, reflecting expanded engagement in social-emotional learning and group activities.

Elementary milieu spaces were accessed over 106,000 times, and secondary wellness hubs over 32,000 times, indicating high student engagement with CYC supports.

A member of SEAC inquired about tracking students diagnosed with anxiety. Kim Booth explained that anxiety is not individually tracked and that anxiety and stress are sometimes grouped together in reporting. Wendy Donaldson added she will investigate how data on anxiety is collected across various forms and support services.

Wendy Donaldson thanked Kim Booth (retiring for the second time) for her leadership and the impact that she's had on the team; supporting the CYCs in schools; and the partnership and the work done throughout the year.

Summer Mental Health Updates 2025-2026

Becky Mantynen, Manager, Social Work & Specialized Teams detailed the summer mental health programs funded by special ministry grants. Programs prioritize Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, and students with mental health needs, offering specialized camps such as equine therapy, therapeutic farming, art/music camps for neurodiverse youth, and online anxiety groups.

Students are referred by child and youth counsellors or social workers, with priority given to those currently receiving support. The selection process considers previous participation, group readiness, and available spots, with over 300 referrals received and about 250 students served.

Camps run throughout July, with transportation provided for some programs. She emphasized the positive impact on students' confidence, regulation, and school engagement.

Trustee Report

Laurie Whyte –

- Awaiting final Budget approval
- Changes from Ministry in terms of expectations and directions
- Trustee elections coming in the fall. She encouraged individuals to consider running

Updates from Superintendent of Education

Wendy Donaldson provided information on the following:

- Schools Recognize Ontario Day on June 1, 2026
- UGDSB Celebrates National Accessibility Week
- Celebrating PRIDE 2026: Building Spaces of Belonging Across the UGDSB
- Celebrating National Indigenous History Month this June
- Project SEARCH Graduation Celebrates Student Success and Workplace Readiness
- Breaking the Silence: Indigenous Education Team Promoting Positive Mental Health this Month
- Aberfoyle PS Student wins Gold at Canada-Wide Science Fair

Meeting Summary, Recommendation(s), Motion(s) and Action(s)

- Correspondence – draft letter of support to be sent out
- Parent Portal Update – Mark Howe to present in September 2026
- Anxiety Data Collection – Investigate and report on how data regarding students with diagnosed anxiety is currently collected and tracked within the board, and how this data can inform programming and supports
- Dianna Secord to follow up on best practices for supporting students with FASD to be communicated to teachers before September
- Check with Brent McDonald and explore opportunities over the summer to enhance bus driver training and preparedness for working with students with special education needs

Other

Wendy Donaldson and Laurie Whyte expressed their thanks to SEAC for their ongoing partnership and commitment. The first SEAC meeting of the new school year is September 9th, 2026 and also FASD International Day. Wear red!

Have a safe and restful summer!

Adjournment:

Moved by: Mandi McCreary

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Carried